

Request for Applications

Watershed Improvement Review Board

Applications are to be received by 4:00 p.m. Friday, February 28, 2014.

Program Explanation:

The Watershed Improvement Review Board (WIRB) is established within Iowa Code Chapter 466A (<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>). The WIRB is responsible for allocating appropriations from the Iowa Legislature in grants for water quality improvement in Iowa, on a watershed basis.

At least \$146,000 will be awarded for purposes of supporting special projects associated with the water quality initiative administered by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation. A list of practices implemented as part of these special projects is attached to this Request For Applications (RFA).

Each application is limited to a maximum of \$300,000 of Watershed Improvement Fund money. A watershed improvement grant may be awarded for a period up to three years. Applicants may submit multiple proposals, but the WIRB will not award more than one grant to an applicant from each appropriation. Approximately \$1,000,000 is available for this RFA. The actual amount will depend upon the funds available at the time of application review and selection in March 2014.

Eligible Applicants:

Soil and water conservation districts, public water supply utilities, counties, county conservation boards and cities **are eligible** to apply for watershed improvement grants. A local watershed improvement committee is a nonprofit organization formed to address watershed problems and is also eligible to apply for watershed improvement grants. A majority of the leadership members of this nonprofit organization must represent the water quality resource concern or impairment of the specific watershed addressed by the proposed project. The local watershed improvement committee must be recognized by the Iowa Secretary of State as a nonprofit organization in Iowa (<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/business/nonprofits/index.html> 515-281-5204).

Eligible Expenses:

Examples of eligible expenses include construction costs and items directly related to the construction of water quality or flood prevention practices, engineering costs to design these practices, public bidding and contracting expenses, salary and benefits for personnel implementing the project and purchasing of easements.

Ineligible Expenses:

Examples of ineligible expenses include contingencies and indirect costs.

Additional information can be obtained from the supporting document entitled 'Sample Expense Categories' found along with the RFA.

Project Assessment Factors:

Applications will be assessed on the following factors. Project assessment factors can be written in any sequence that is logical for the individual application. However, all project assessment factors must be identified and addressed.

- 1) Assessment—a comprehensive watershed assessment has been completed. The water quality impairments or areas subject to flooding are clearly identified and prioritized. Flood prevention will include methods to improve water quality by increasing infiltration or retention of runoff in the watershed to reduce the peak runoff rate. Applications that propose hard-armored streambank stabilization must complete a stream corridor assessment by a person trained in geo-fluvial processes to avoid unintended consequences in the stream. Supporting data is supplied. (For purposes of this RFA, the waterbody does not have to be included on the Iowa 303 (d) list.)

- 2) Goals—goals of the project are clearly outlined and target the source(s) of the identified impairment(s) as identified in the assessment.
- 3) Results—the application should contain sufficient information so that the following questions are answered: *Is the scope of the project appropriate for the size of the watershed? How will the watershed improvement(s) effectiveness be measured? Can the results be realistically achieved within the timeframe of the project? Is appropriate technology utilized to achieve the desired results?*
- 4) Collaboration and Local Leadership—inclusion of a diverse group of partners necessary to provide technical and other expertise. Local leadership has been identified and there is demonstrated involvement with those that affect and are affected by the watershed.
- 5) Leveraging and Cost Effectiveness—the project area has been identified as a local priority and other sources of support are available to address water quality or flood prevention. Methods described are a cost effective means to accomplish the outlined goals.
- 6) Project Management and Accountability—mechanisms are in place for evaluation of results of this project and there is flexibility to implement changes necessary for a successful project; demonstrates financial responsibility. Please note that the WIRB will withhold 10% of the total grant award until the final comprehensive report is accepted by the WIRB.
- 7) Public Outreach—methods for communicating with the public before, during and after the project are apparent; information is transferable to other potential projects.
- 8) Innovation—implementing new practices, methods, or reduction of costs, to improve water quality that may be replicated in other projects.
- 9) Emphasis on reducing nitrogen and phosphorus losses to waters of the state—effectiveness of the activities and practices proposed in the application to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus as described in the last revision of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy. See the attachment *Reducing Nutrient Loss: Science Shows What Works, SP 435*

Required Information:

- a) Application Summary Form supplied with this RFA **MUST** be used.
- b) Narrative of the proposed project and a timeline. See the assessment criteria for additional information to be included in the narrative. **This portion of the application must not exceed 6 pages single spaced, Arial 11 font, and standard one-inch margins.** The narrative shall explain the proposed project clearly and must not rely upon supporting attached materials for the proposed project to be understood.
- c) Sixteen copies of the complete application packet with each copy stapled in the upper left-hand corner as well as a compact disk (CD) of the complete application must be submitted.
- d) If the applicant is a local watershed improvement committee entity, proof of legal designation as a state of Iowa nonprofit is required. List the leadership members of the local watershed improvement committee. Indicate how this committee meets the code requirement for committee structure (*A majority of the members of the committee shall represent a cause for the impairment of the watershed, Iowa Code 466A.4*).
- e) Project Budget Form. Develop budgets on **a calendar year basis** starting with 2014. The Excel spreadsheet budget form supplied with this RFA **MUST** be used. Use one budget worksheet per year and include one summary budget worksheet summing all the years of the application.
- f) Letters of contribution from project funders and partners confirming cash and in-kind (non-cash) support **MUST** be included with the application, except landowners receiving cost-share assistance from the project and are contributing only their share of the practice cost. Cash and in-kind (non-cash) contributions to the project must be identified on the budget as to source and use. Applications listing in-kind (non-cash) contributions shall complete the ‘In-Kind (non-cash) Contributions Worksheet’ and include it with the application. In-kind (non-cash) contributions must be measureable and able to be documented and shown on the WIRB ledger when contributed.
- g) A map of the watershed showing its location within the county or counties and nearby cities and towns.
- h) If land acquisition or easements are required to complete the project please describe and include the strategy for funding the acquisition/easements, even if the acquisitions or easements are not funded through the WIRB.

- i) Optional—relevant GIS maps, relevant data sets, vitas.
- j) Complete and attach the *Minority Impact Evaluation* form supplied with this RFA.
- k) Complete the final checklist attached to this RFA and ensure all instructions are followed and materials included. **Attach the completed checklist as the last page to each application.**

PLEASE MAIL OR DELIVER A COMPLETE APPLICATION PACKET ON A COMPACT DISK (CD) AND SIXTEEN (16) COPIES TO BE RECEIVED BY 4:00 p.m. Friday, February 28, 2014 to:

Watershed Improvement Review Board
IDALS-Division of Soil Conservation
502 E 9th St
Des Moines IA 50319

Questions: Call Jerry Neppel at 515-281-3599 or via email at: jerry.neppel@iowaagriculture.gov .

Applications Approved for Funding:

Consideration will be given to all qualified applications. Applicants selected for funding will be required to enter into a grant agreement with the Watershed Improvement Review Board. This grant agreement will list the required work products, administrative requirements and other information necessary to successfully implement the funded project. These work products, administrative requirements and other information include:

- The ‘Start Date’ and ‘End Date’ of the grant agreement between the applicant and the Watershed Improvement Review Board and is the timeframe when all WIRB, partner and applicant funds and in-kind contributions are incurred.
- A project-length plan of work to be prepared and approved by the WIRB not to exceed three years.
- Progress reporting requirements.
- The WIRB will withhold 10% of the total grant award until the final comprehensive report is accepted by the WIRB.
- Public contract and bidding procedures will be used.
- Ensure practices installed comply with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Standards and Specifications (http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx?map=IA), the Stormwater Management Manual (<http://www.iowasudas.org/>) Standards or follow sound engineering principles and practices if an NRCS or Stormwater Management Manual standard is not available.

Improving Your Application:

The Watershed Improvement Review Board offers these suggestions to improve your application.

- Use the Watershed Project Planning Protocol found on the website at: <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/technical/protocolguide.pdf> to help you develop your application.
- Obtain assistance from the Regional Basin Coordinator for your area:
 - Bob Waters – western Iowa—515-306-7012
 - Kyle Ament, interim Basin Coordinator -- Upper Des Moines and Raccoon River Watersheds—515-242-6196
 - Jeff Tisl – northeast Iowa—563-422-6201
 - James Martin – southeast Iowa—641-472-8411 extension 104
- Obtain assistance from an urban conservationist for urban components in your proposal. Contact Wayne Petersen at 515-281-5833, wayne.petersen@iowaagriculture.gov .
- Consult with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section (Roger Bruner, supervisor, 319-560-6128) for assistance in developing any water quality monitoring plan for your application.
- Develop your project using a watershed-based approach. Information on your proposed project watershed can be obtained as follows: http://programs.iowadnr.gov/ims/website/water_monitoring/

This website can also be used to locate the name and number of the Hydrologic Unit Code 12 (HUC-12) and x and y geographic coordinates.

- Ensure your application is easy to read. Appropriate use of underlining and bolding for headings and subheadings is helpful to the reviewer.
- If your group is a Local Watershed Improvement Committee, be sure to list the committee leadership members and how a majority of these members relate to a cause for the impairment in the watershed.
- The purpose of this grant program is to implement water quality improvement projects. Quantification of environmental improvements in the application is expected. Quantification of environmental improvements will include the quantity of the pollutant being reduced (i.e. tons of sediment, pounds of phosphorus), but also a percent reduction of the pollutant loading in the project watershed based upon the previously completed watershed assessment. Seek assistance from the technical resource people listed above to quantify these environmental benefits.
- Check the website for updates at: <http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/IWIRB.asp> . The date of the last update for each RFA document is listed next to the document. Check the website before submitting your application for any changes in the RFA. Review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the website.

Final Checklist—Minimum Criteria

(Please note that applications not meeting the following minimum criteria will not be reviewed or considered for funding by the WIRB)

- _____ The Application Narrative Summary Form is completed and attached.
- _____ The application is watershed-based and addresses major water quality impairment(s) (not limited to the impairments or waters listed on the Iowa 303(d) list) in the watershed. A map of the watershed showing its location within the county or counties and nearby cities and towns is included.
- _____ The proposal narrative does not exceed six pages with Arial 11 font and one-inch margins and explains the project without supplemental information.
- _____ A Local Watershed Improvement Committee provides a copy of the Secretary of State Certificate of Existence showing the nonprofit organization corporation number.
- _____ A Local Watershed Improvement Committee lists the leadership members of the committee and how a majority of these members represent a cause for the impairment of the watershed.
- _____ A contribution letter for monetary or in-kind support is received from each funding source contributing to this project listed on the Project Budget Form, except landowners receiving cost-share assistance from the project and are contributing only their share of the practice cost.
- _____ The monetary or in-kind support of each contributor is shown on the Project Budget Form.
- _____ The Project Budget Form is used, is completed correctly and includes a SUMMARY worksheet.
- _____ The In-Kind (non-cash) Contributions Worksheet is completed and attached if non-cash contributions are part of the proposed budget.
- _____ Submit sixteen (16) paper copies of the application.
- _____ Submit an electronic copy of the entire application on a compact disk (CD). Limit the size of individual documents to 7 MB. If necessary, break large documents into smaller parts less than 7 MB.
- _____ Attach this completed final checklist as the last page to each application.
- _____ Ensure the entire application is received by 4:00 p.m. Friday, February 28, 2014.